

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus for the distributed programmable control of multiple devices, each capable of independent operation and of performing a set of related functions or operations, to operate concurrently or sequentially and in cooperation to perform a predetermined task or operation. A device controller is associated with each process device wherein each device controller controls the operations of the associated process device and includes a process step memory for storing a device process. Each device process includes one or more device steps wherein each device step corresponds to a process step and controls one or more corresponding operations of the associated process device. A master controller generates step execute identifiers to the device controllers and the device controllers are responsive to the step execute identifiers for cooperatively performing the corresponding device steps of the device processes, generating control outputs corresponding to the device steps to the associated process devices to direct the associated process devices to perform the device steps. The process steps may be generated in the master controller and distributed to the device controllers, or in device controllers with the master controller coordinating the designation and identification of the device steps in process steps.